



## Memorandum

To: Board of Park Commissioners  
From: David Graves, AICP  
Date: August 31, 2006  
Subject: SR 520 - Draft Environmental Impact Statement

### Requested Board Action

This briefing is being held at the request of the Board of Park Commissioners. No action is requested from the Board at this time by Seattle Parks and Recreation. The Board may decide to make a recommendation to the Superintendent, Mayor and City Council and/or choose to comment on the Draft Environmental Impact Statement at its September 14<sup>th</sup> meeting; it may decide to take no action at this time and schedule regular update briefings as the project moves forward; or it may make a recommendation and/or comment in two weeks.

### Project Description and Background

The project before the Board of Park Commissioners is the SR 520 Bridge Replacement and HOV Project Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS). The project proponent is the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). WSDOT is also the co-lead agency under both the State and National Environmental Policy Acts (SEPA & NEPA), with Sound Transit and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). The DEIS was issued on August 18<sup>th</sup> and the public comment period runs through October 2<sup>nd</sup>. Note that there will be a public hearing on the DEIS on Monday September 18<sup>th</sup>, at the Museum of History and Industry, from 4 to 7 pm. Note also that the public comment period may be extended based on requests from the University of Washington, the Board of Park Commissioners or others.

The DEIS discusses the potential environmental impacts associated with three alternatives: a new 4-lane structure with a variety of options, a new 6-lane structure with a variety of options, and a no action alternative. For both the 4- lane and 6- lane alternatives, the project limits extend along the SR 520 corridor from I-5 in Seattle to 108th Avenue NE on the Eastside (just west of I-405). The 6-lane alternative also includes minor improvements to eastbound SR 520 between I-405 and 124th Avenue NE.<sup>1</sup> Also, both the 4- lane and the 6- lane alternatives could include a Pacific Street/Arboretum interchange. A tube/tunnel is *not* one of the alternatives in the DEIS.

Seattle Parks and Recreation is one of the many public departments and agencies which are working with and commenting on WSDOT's proposal. Parks' comments will be part of the coordinated City of Seattle's comments on the DEIS.

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<sup>1</sup> Information from WSDOT SR 520 Project Website.

## **Park Board Opportunities to Comment on the DEIS**

The Board has several avenues of input on the project and specifically the DEIS. The Boards' input directly with staff is invaluable as we review and draft comments on the DEIS. The Board may choose to review the DEIS and comment directly to WSDOT on the DEIS during the public comment period. The Board could send a representative to the public hearing on September 18<sup>th</sup> and provide oral and/or written comments to WSDOT at the hearing.<sup>2</sup> The Board could also provide comments to staff to be included in the Department's comments, which would be included in the overall City comments. Finally, individual Board members could provide oral and/or written comments to WSDOT during the public comment period.

## **DEIS Issues**

Overall, the DEIS is a well crafted document that outlines the potential short and long-term environmental impacts associated with the SR520 replacement project. The following is an outline of the issues that staff has identified in our preliminary review. These issues will form the basis for our comments:

- Loss of Bagley Viewpoint;
- Impacts to submerged park lands/loss of aquatic recreation opportunities;
- Structure width - Shading of vegetation, impacts to terrestrial and aquatic habitat and passive recreation areas;
- Structure height (positive and negative)
- Through traffic on Lake Washington Boulevard;
- Noise and traffic impacts on the Japanese Garden;
- Permanent closure of the Lake Washington Boulevard on/off-ramps to SR 520;
- Visual impacts of noise walls on the Arboretum;
- Quiet pavement;
- Pacific Street/Arboretum Interchange - direct impacts to the north end of the Arboretum, particularly Marsh and Foster Islands; spillover traffic impacts throughout the Arboretum;
- Loss of the MOHAI building;
- Loss of McCurdy Park;
- Impacts to East Montlake Park;
- WSDOT peninsula;
- Operate the roadway at non-highway speed; and,
- Mitigation package.

## **Schedule**

Once the comment period ends October 2, 2006, WSDOT and the other the lead agencies (FHWA & Sound Transit) will respond to comments. A Preferred Alternative will be identified later this year or early in 2007. The Final EIS is expected to be issued by the fall of 2007. Following issuance of the Final EIS, a Record of Decision will be issued by the Federal Highway Administration.

## **Additional Information**

If you any questions regarding the SR520 project, contact David Graves at 684-7048 or e-mail to [david.graves@seattle.gov](mailto:david.graves@seattle.gov).

WSDOT's SR 520 Project Website is: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/projects/SR520Bridge>

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<sup>2</sup> There is also a public hearing on September 21<sup>st</sup> at the St. Luke's Lutheran Church in Bellevue.